

GRIER'S NOTES ON THE FLORA OF LONG ISLAND.<sup>1</sup>

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Two botanical journals have been carrying for some months a series of papers on the flora of Long Island. The value of these is practically *nil* and the publication of them should have been declined. The bibliographical footnote discloses not only shortcomings upon the author's part, but an editorial leniency, or carelessness, matched only by the spelling and imperfect bibliography in the main body of the work. More than two score errors of this sort could be enumerated, were there space or inclination to publish such a list. But the actual statements about the plants of the island challenge attention.

Under the general heading "The Native Flora of the Vicinity of Cold Spring Harbor, L. I., N. Y." four things are incorrect: (1) Many of the plants are not native, as particulars below specify; (2) "Flora" is incorrect since scores of garden or specimen plants on private estates are included; (3) by no means all occur, even by stretching one's notion of the "vicinity" of Cold Spring Harbor, anywhere near this locality; (4) in the text (page 24 of the reprint) the author says that besides other sources he has included "all those species *apt* to be encountered by members of the Laboratory." The italics are mine. To allow such a mixture of ideas to appear under the title "Native Flora" is to put serious students of the flora of the island to the wholly needless burden of checking through

<sup>1</sup> Grier, N. M. Unreported plants from Long Island. I. Pteridophyta and Spermatophyta. *Torrey* **24**: 71-76. 28 O 1924. [Reprint dated 1994.]

Unreported plants from Long Island, N. Y. II. Cryptogams exclusive of Pteridophyta. *Torrey* **25**: 5-11. Ja-F 1925.

Unreported plants from Long Island, N. Y. II. Cryptogams—Part 2. *Torrey* **25**: 29-35. Mr-Apr 1925.

The native flora of the vicinity of Cold Spring Harbor, N. Y. Schizophyta, Myxomycetes, Dinoflagellatae, Bacillariophyta. *Am. Midl. Nat.* **9**: 245-256. S-N 1924.

The native flora of the vicinity of Cold Spring Harbor, N. Y. (Continued). *Am. Midl. Nat.* **9**: 283-318. Ja 1925.

II. Pteridophyta. (Continued). *Am. Midl. Nat.* **9**: 384-437. My 1925. [Presumably part of the series on Cold Spring Harbor, but there is nothing to indicate this in table of contents, or article heading. Includes, beside Pteridophyta, all flowering plants.]

The fossil flora of the vicinity of Cold Spring Harbor, *Am. Midl. Nat.* **9**: 513-527. Jl 1925. [Includes besides fossil species a section on Insect Galls.]

The geology of Long Island with especial reference to the Cold Spring Harbor region and its flora. *Am. Midl. Nat.* **9**: 531-563. S 1925.

The papers from the American Midland Naturalist, not in their original order, with new page numbers (1-265, one-half blank) and no date were reprinted as "The Native Flora of the Vicinity of Cold Spring Harbor, L. I., New York." Contribution no. 8 from the Biological Laboratory, Cold Spring Harbor, N. Y.



hundreds of such records on the off chance that some wheat may turn up among the chaff.

To particularize with thoroughness would try the patience of the editors and readers of RHODORA, as it has already exhausted that of several workers on the flora and vegetation of Long Island. A few examples will suffice:

"*Vaccinium Vitis-Idaea*. Rocky soil, Bayville, L. I.—N. M. G." Finding that plant on Long Island would be comparable to the recent discovery of *Empetrum nigrum* at Montauk.<sup>1</sup> William C. Ferguson Esq., of Hempstead, an enthusiastic and accurate student of the flora of the island wrote for particulars to Dr. Grier, who referred to a card catalog of species at the laboratory, merely recording the extraordinary "find" as it is printed above. There is no specimen, and the author attached so little importance to reporting this arctic-alpine species from Long Island, that he was vague, to say the least, in attempting to substantiate the record.

"*Thuja occidentalis* . . . White Cedar Swamp, Merrick, L. I." This tree is unknown, outside of cultivation, on Long Island. Merrick is in the town of Hempstead, on the south shore of the island, and separated from the Cold Spring Harbor region by the ecologically different vegetation of the Hempstead Plains. Merrick, Ronkonkoma, and other localities which the author particularizes have no more to do with the vicinity of Cold Spring Harbor than Montauk. Many species should be cut from the list, notably those recorded from the Plains, pine barren bogs, and the pitch pine barrens of the interior of the island,—hardly geographically, and certainly not floristically, the "vicinity" of Cold Spring Harbor.

Perhaps the worst feature of the lists is the inclusion of many species wholly unknown as wild plants, on Long Island and, of course, not native. On the Havemeyer, DeForest, Love, Hodenpyl, and Frank Bailey estates, as well as some others, there have been skillful and successful attempts to cultivate rare, or beautiful, or interesting plants. Upon what theory the author selected some of these for inclusion in his lists of native or unreported plants of Long Island, no one can guess. *Ledum groenlandicum*, *Sarracenia flava*, *Trillium grandiflorum*, *Hexastylis virginica*, *Sibbaldiopsis* (*Potentilla*) *tridentata*, *Amorpha fruticosa*, *Calluna vulgaris*, *Paulownia tomentosa* and *Centaurea cyanus* indicate a cheerful inclusiveness in the author's point of view as to the material coming within the scope of local flora studies.

For a good many years Mr. Hicks has maintained a large and successful nursery at Westbury, but no one would be more surprised than he to see *Pachysandra procumbens* and *Euonymus atropurpureus* selected from his list of garden plants for inclusion in a native flora of Cold Spring Harbor. Both of these are credited to the nursery,

<sup>1</sup> Taylor, N. & Hill, H. S. The crowberry at Montauk, Long Island. *Torreyana* 24: 87. 28 O 1924.



which is miles from Cold Spring Harbor, on the Hempstead Plains. The former is also credited to the DeForest place.

Inaccuracy as to plant names and place names characterizes all the lists. Such work naturally stirs suspicion that some records are incorrect, or that plants may have been misidentified.

*Millegrana Radiola*, for instance, is recorded in Gray's Manual only from "Ditches, Louisburg, Cape Breton," yet it is said to be in "Vicinity, Cold Spring Harbor." No one, not even Jelliffe, who was almost as inclusive as Dr. Grier, has recorded this rare introduced plant from Long Island.

Among the records of Hollick and Jeffrey of fossil plants, Dr. Grier has included scores that are so far reported only from Staten Island, and he cites them so. Why he or the editors admit them into a native flora of Cold Spring Harbor may be known to them. To others their inclusion looks very like useless consumption of printer's ink.

American botanists have lately been accused of an excessive politeness in their criticisms of current botanical literature. Notwithstanding the accusation, the reviewer attempted the desperate expedient suggested by Rose and Stevens in *Science* n. s. **61**: 656-657. 26 Je 1925. He wrote to one of the editors suggesting a curb,—not a drastic one, but some sort of a curb. Nothing happened except a continuance of the flood. Under such circumstances excessive politeness must make way for reviews like this, the writing of which, while not precisely a pleasure, becomes a duty.

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